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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

A PROFESSIONAL READING COURSE ON THE EDUCATIONAL WORK OF THE CHURCH. III

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After all possible emphasis has been put upon religious education in the home and the school, it will remain that the institution which must make this subject its supreme interest is the church. We shall therefore need a growing literature, scientifically prepared, upon principles and methods for the educational work of the church. The number of books of the first rank in this field is not yet very large, but there are a dozen or so that every minister should know. We select for special study:

Burton and Mathews, *Principles and Ideals in the Sunday School*.
Cope, *Efficiency in the Sunday School*.
Cope, *The Efficient Layman*.
Haslett, *The Pedagogical Bible School*.

The first of these books was an outgrowth of the experience of the Hyde Park Baptist Sunday School of Chicago, of which the late President Harper was the superintendent. He was a pioneer in the organization of the religious mass-meeting, which had been known as a Sunday school, upon the lines of a pedagogical institution. Professor E. D. Burton was the director of religious education in this school and Professor Mathews one of the teachers. The

book, *Principles and Ideals in the Sunday School*, represents the experience up to the year 1903. The authors would be the first to insist that account must be taken of developments in religious pedagogy since that time, to which we may call special attention. The work is in two parts, the first dealing with the teacher, the second with the school. The Bible, as the subject-matter of the teaching, is very definitely in mind in this treatment. The preparation of the teacher, the methods of biblical interpretation, the pedagogical procedure, the moral and spiritual results to be sought are the subjects here dealt with. It is expected that there shall be a very definite intellectual content in the work of the pupils. At the same time the goal ever kept in view is the attainment of a clear personal religious faith. An excellent chapter on the pastor as the teacher of teachers indicates his responsibility in view of the new appreciation of the Bible.

The second part deals with Sunday-school organization. The theory of a completely graded school is carried out. And, notwithstanding the advance in this direction that has been made in the last twenty years, this discussion of

grading is still very timely. Those who have not yet got away from the old idea of the Sunday-school superintendent as a platform leader of a mass of people from infants to adults should consider carefully the duties of the various departmental officers here suggested.

It is likely that the ideal curriculum will not be as exclusively biblical as this plan of ten years ago contemplated. And later experience would change the three years of study in the books of the Bible to studies more definitely biographical. The question of examinations is bound up with the larger question: How far can our Sunday-school work be of a severe intellectual nature? It is proving exceedingly difficult to secure this from older students. The North Dakota plan of high-school credit would of course put the matter on a different basis.

The chapter on "The Function of a Sunday-School Ritual" deals with a most important subject. The ordinary "opening and closing exercises" have little of the worshipful character. But there is great opportunity here for education in religious feeling.

The most recent work upon our problem by an expert is Cope's *Efficiency in the Sunday School*. The author is the general secretary of the Religious Education Association and therefore has the opportunity of first-hand knowledge of a great range of religious educational problems. He believes strongly that the church is a teaching institution and that it should take the matter of training its teachers very seriously. The problem of grading is here discussed with some very much-needed warnings. Indeed, wherever an attempt has been

made to improve the educational work of the church there has been the danger of allowing some intellectual aim to become dominant. Of course intellectual achievement is not religious efficiency.

Dr. Cope makes his efficiency tests very clear. He deals with building and equipment, where very much remains to be done; with results in life, where clear understanding is most necessary; with order and discipline, where some very fine educational values are possible; with efficiency in the critical years, analyzing the problem which so often baffles Sunday schools.

This book is not a list of ready-made devices, but it does present in a most practical way methods for improving our work. The discussions on music, boys' activities, rural and city schools, and teacher preparation will be found full of suggestion.

The religious education of the adult is a matter that has received all too little consideration. And yet a church is largely a school for adults. Indeed it is the only formal school that the majority of our people ever get beyond the grammar school. We have been so much concerned with securing the performance of the necessary church work, that we have not realized enough that the activities in which church members engage constitute a most valuable practical education for them. This needs to be scientifically evaluated if the best results are to be obtained. Moreover the instruction given to adults has not generally been carefully planned to suit their needs. There ought to be a definite progress from the young people's classes to those of adults. The books already discussed have dealt with adult

classes, but the whole problem of adult education as applied to men is the subject of Cope's *The Efficient Layman*. A study is made in that book of the various men's clubs, leagues, brotherhoods, organized classes throughout the country, and of their various activities. It is a comment on the difficulty of the endeavor to secure the special interest of men in the church that a number of the organizations discussed in this book are already moribund. The life of a new male movement for the resuscitation of the church is generally from two to five years. And yet some of the methods here discussed have proved their permanent value and have survived the mortality of infant schemes.

It may be questioned whether all writers on men and boys do not exaggerate the differences between the sexes in religious matters. The vigorous girl or the effective woman of today would scarcely recognize her own religious experience in the passive, subjective, feminine type, which is so often presented as unattractive to the masculine nature. Probably all of us, women as well as men, believe in a religion of action, of effectiveness against misery and evil, and of fellowship with God in positive goodness.

The principles of adult training and development in religious service laid down in *The Efficient Layman* can be applied to the whole work of the church. We do not so much need subsidiary organizations as competent leaders in the various branches of church endeavor.

The Pedagogical Bible School by Haslett is an elaborate discussion of a curriculum of religious education on the basis of a presentation of the results of

genetic psychology. The author is of the school of Dr. G. Stanley Hall, whose positions in his large work on *Adolescence* are well represented here. The theory of race recapitulation needs to be accepted with great care, but the general characterizations of childhood and youth are very suggestive.

Part I gives in outline the history of religious education. Great changes have taken place in the International Sunday-School organization in the last ten years, and the reader who has not kept himself informed of these advances would do well to see how largely Dr. Haslett's criticisms are happily out of date.

The subject of genetic psychology is of greatest importance for our problem. Haslett in Part II has treated it in a popular and interesting manner, which affords a good introduction to an understanding of the stages of development of childhood and youth. He has included a genetic study of the psychology of religion, indicating the moral and religious manifestations at the various periods of life. His treatment of the emotional instability of adolescence is especially full.

The principal portion of the book, Part III, is the discussion of the curriculum, one of the most complete that has been made. It is of especial value because he has discussed all available material, not limiting himself to the Bible. His treatment of stories, of the miraculous, of pictures, poetry, nature material is excellent. And every minister who tries to preach children's sermons should take warning from the section on "Object Teaching."

After treating the general principles of the curriculum, Haslett gives a

detailed course of studies for seven periods of life. It is so full as to include practically everything available in religious material. It might be possible to disagree with incidental points, but in the main all scientific opinion would indorse the presentation here made.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. May the Sunday school use extra-biblical material? If so, to what extent?
2. What is the specific responsibility of the pastor for an efficient Sunday school?
3. Can the entire educational work of the church be organically related in one comprehensive scheme?
4. What is the difference between masculine and feminine religion?
5. Can we train the lay administrative officers of a church?
6. What Sunday-school textbooks have proved satisfactory?
7. Should we build an auditorium and use it for an educational institution?

SOME FURTHER WORKS

- Pease, *An Outline of a Bible-School Curriculum.*
 Alexander, *The Sunday School and the Teens.*
 Cope, *The Modern Sunday School in Principle and Practice.*
 Littlefield, *Handwork in the Sunday School.*
 Crooker, *The Church of Today.*
 Barbour, *Making Religion Efficient.*
 Cressey, *The Church and the Young Man.*
 Rayment, *The Use of the Bible in the Education of the Young.*
 Hartshorne, *Worship in the Sunday School.*

SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES USING THE ORIGIN AND TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS¹

For several reasons the work of the present month is of very great value to the students of this course, and especially to those who are studying in groups. Because of the fact that the story reverts, in this second book written by Luke, to Paul with whose life the class became familiar in the first three months of the course, the present chapter presents an opportunity for a thorough review and a rapid survey of the life of Paul, without the hampering necessity of the consideration of the letters which he wrote.

More than this, however, the Book of Acts, which contains the material for our present study, presents to the class for the

first time a full picture of the pre-Pauline work of the early church. Centering at first around the enthusiastic preaching of Peter and the Jerusalem apostles, Luke carries us in his fascinating narrative through all of the period of the missionary activities of the church, the great problems arising out of the conversion of the gentiles, and the endeavors of the Christians to interpret their new experiences in the light of their early training as well as upon the basis of the principles set forth by Jesus. Through this book we come into close contact with the bitter division of the Jewish society into Christian and non-Christian groups, and the persecutions which arose out of this division.

¹The suggestions relate to the eighth month's work, the student's material for which appears in the *Biblical World* for April and may be obtained in pamphlet reprints for use with classes. Address: THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, The University of Chicago.